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ABSTRACT

Physical Verbalization (PV) is a program designed to encourage language/speech development by combining movement with appropriate verbal patterns. Using the normal developmental stages of listening/watching, imitating, and initiating, the program allows the child to "play" with standard English in a nonthreatening and rhythmic fashion and to be less intimidated by the language. PV is useful for: (1) children who have demonstrated ability in the use of standard patterns of language and speech; (2) children who have had insufficient exposure in use of the oral communication skills of listening and speaking; and (3) children who show difficulty in attaining anticipated levels and for whom PV can become a diagnostic and remedial process. The program is applicable in English and non-English classes and has been field tested in urban bilingual classes, in inner city schools, and among children with language disorders and learning disabilities. (Author/MJL)

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PHYSICAL VERBALIZATION: A MOTOR-LANGUAGE BASED DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAM

Originated and presented by Dr. Norma D. Smith

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PHYSICAL VERBALIZATION: A MOTOR-LANGUAGE BASED DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAM

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Physical Verbalization is a program designed to encourage and increase language/speech development by combining movement with appropriate verbal patterns. The child produces physical activity either simultaneously with verbal accompaniment, or in sequential order. The child's experience in these spheres helps him/her to establish concepts and inner language. Inner language -- intra-personal communication -- is that old fashioned faculty known as thinking. This internalizing or thinking is done, largely, in speech symbols.

As a Speech Pathologist, involved in a program of language/speech development for inner-city children, I devised and first used Physical Verbalization (PV) in 1963 for a slow-moving second grade class. For the next five years, I used PV with many different groups of children; the childhood aphasic, the language disordered, the mentally retarded, the learning disabled, as well as using it for demonstrational programs in regular classrooms. It was used in Hartford's Head Start-Child Development Program and in suburban kindergarten and first grade classrooms. In 1974 and 1975, parts of the program were adapted for a preschool handicapped class. Its most recent application has been in an urban bilingual kindergarten class, from January to June, 1979. Most of the children involved have been inner-city school children.

Findings noted during this informal, longitudinal study include:

1. The inner-city child often comes from a home where the adult/child conversation is largely instructional or commanding in nature. "Pick up your toys," "Wash up for lunch," "It's time to get ready for bed," etc. This limited interaction becomes a part of the many hours of television viewing, also passively received. The child enters school where the first criterion of a "good" teacher is equated to the degree of quiet that can be maintained in the classroom. This child has had very little opportunity to actively involve himself/herself in meaningful listening and talking experiences.

2. Frequently, this child's peer contacts are with other children who have similar language/speech experiential limitations. While the philosophy of youth teaching youth is one I support, along with many other educators, it is not a viable one to rely on in the early years when the need for expanding academic/speech language and vocabulary is vital.

3. Most language arts programs include the listening/speaking portions in the total program. In many instances, however, the teachers rush the children through to the workbook and ditto sheet stages of the program. Again, there is limitation in the practice of listening and speaking.

4. The use of PV did not strip the child of his own language identity. It simply allowed him/her to "play" with hearing and saying standard English structures so they no longer felt or sounded "funny" and alien to the child.

5. The use of PV indicated it was a method that helped to broaden the child's listening, speaking and descriptive vocabulary as a result of regular training sessions that were frequent and of short duration.

Hands on activities and movements in PV are accompanied by oral speech patterns that describe and explain those activities. The active involvement of the child is thereby carried over into the verbalization plane. "We learn by doing," is relevant to both physical activity and language/speech skill development. However, if we accept the premise, "We learn by doing," then we must also accept its corollary, "We can learn only that which we are allowed to do." From the start, the child is actively involved in the motor-speech patterning process.

PV includes another element that regularly reinforces the motor-speech patterning. Rhythm is a strong component in establishing those patterns. It is the glue that holds together and integrates the developmental segments of motor, language-speech functions into a learning whole, well within the child's maturational limits and progress. The operation of various types of muscles, working harmoniously with each other in smooth fluid action, is motoric rhythm. In the language-speech area, rhythm is the combining of melodic intonation patterns and stressed syllable configurations into recognized speech codes. Every child who learns to talk, acquires the normal natural rhythm that characterizes his native tongue. This acquisition occurs before the child has very much intelligible speech.

Rhythm serves a second purpose in PV, relevant to the affective domain. Pattern setting by adults, a form of drill, may fall into the category of nagging, typical of many adult-child relationships. Adults, parents or teachers, tell children what to do and how to do it on a fairly regular basis. This flow of instructional language may be perceived as nagging by the child. Rhythm tends to attract and maintain the interest and attention of the child. It may well help to avoid the reaction of boredom to the drill.

By using normal sequential processes -- watching/listening, imitating and initiating -- PV, at the first level, leads the child to watch and listen. The second level is to have the child imitate specific movement and verbal patterns that are set for him. Watching/listening and imitating stages comprise the beginning of the "doing" cycle, and are implemented in a controlled learning situation. The teacher contrives the patterns into the learning environment. With sufficient practice at observation and imitation in the controlled situation, the child makes unforced and incidental progress toward voluntary initiation of meaningful verbalization. He passes the imitative stage of doing and enters the "Aha" learning stage. When this happens, the child begins to move from the imitative, concrete to a level of learning that is more symbolic/abstract and is initiated from his own level of comprehension.

PV strives to blend motor-verbal elements into a learning unit, consonant with the child's ability to comprehend and use that unit. It makes use of procedures that are found in normal, developmental processes. At the very least, the child is less intimidated by Standard English because he has "played" with it in a non-threatening and rhythmic fashion. The video tape of children working in the program demonstrates the use of rhythm and movement, difficult to absorb from the printed page.

PV can be of use to a triple population: 1) for the child who has demonstrated ability in the use of standard patterns of language and speech, 2) for the child who has had insufficient exposure in use of the oral communication skills of listening and speaking, and 3) for the child who shows some real difficulty in attaining the anticipated levels, PV can become a diagnostic and remedial process. PV is applicable in English and non-English classes.

The suggested three-level lesson for language/speech development outlined below may be used as introductory practice, supplementary exercise, or as part of a maintenance program, depending on the teacher's objectives and/or the child's need. It can be used in a variety of subject contents: vocabulary building, spelling, number factors, etc.

I. Three-level lesson for language/speech development -

A. The teacher identifies/names everything.. (vocabulary lesson)

"This is a ....." The child repeats, "This is a ....."
(listening and imitating)

B. The teacher checks the identification and memory of previously named item.

"Show me a ....." Child picks up, or touches, or points to the named item. The teacher repeats the item's name, whether or not the child says it.
(further auditory stimulus)

C. The teacher asks the child "What is this?" Child names the specific object the teacher has indicated.
(initiation with visual clue being present)

CAUTION: The child's naming of the object is by no means assurance that the child really understands what he is saying. Children can parrot what they hear very easily. They may need many exposures to hearing and saying the term before they can really take meaning to the name.

The following information is merely a reminder of those activity areas which teachers incorporate into the learning environment of young children. Through imitation and repetition, the child has sufficient opportunity to learn, to handle adequately the materials used, and finally to refine and/or improve the precision of the skill needed for efficient and economic transaction of the activity. BE SURE TO NAME AND DESCRIBE EVERYTHING APPROPRIATELY, AS IT IS USED...

II. Perceptual Development -

A. For the Sense of Touch

1. Match fabric swatches of different textures.
2. Match heavy and light objects.
3. Match hot and cold, warm and cool objects.
4. Match various grades of sand paper.
5. Match basic shapes to basic shapes tactiley for size and shape.

B. For the Sense of Hearing

1. Locate direction from which sound emanates.
2. Identify sounds common to the environment without seeing what it is that produces it.
3. Grade sounds from loud to soft, and from high pitch to low pitch.

PYHSICAL VERBALIZATION (cont.)

C. For the Sense of Smell and Taste -

1. Identify and name basic tastes in food - sweet, sour, salt and bitter.
2. Identify and name common smells - vanilla, mint, maple , coffee, garlic. (food flavorings provide both taste and smell)
3. Make simple foods in class - jello, pudding, popcorn, butter, etc.

D. For the Sense of Sight -

1. Match colors and shapes visually.
2. Grade size and color from small to big, dark to light, etc.
3. Transfer or generalize matching of objects to some kind of symbolic formulation, picture, outline, pattern, etc., that represents the object.

III. Language Development, in conjunction with previously mentioned activities -

1. Identify sameness and differencess.
2. Classify according to what goes together.
3. Grade from gross differences to fine details of differences.
4. Use descriptive words to enhance meaning: thick - thin,- wide - narrow,- loud - soft, rough - smooth, bright - dull, sweet - sour, etc.
5. Use quantifying and qualifying words: more - less, longer - shorter, now - later, this morning - this afternoon.
6. Use concrete descriptive language when giving directions: "Get the blue book on the bottom shelf," etc.

IV. Expand the activities suggested from I through III to the home, neighborhood, community. For example, after the concept of roundness and circle is learned, continue with:

1. "What do you see in the room that is round?" "The clock, the jar, etc." (generalizing the concept to items other than those that were used in the initial learning)

2. "What can you think of in your house that is round?" "Dishes, radio and T.V. dials, car tires, etc." (this activity involves mental imagery, the necessary element for expanded learning to the initiation from memory stage)

A final reminder ..... as we become engrossed in the learning activities devised for the child, we need to remember general needs of children in establishing an appropriate classroom climate conducive to learning

Children have:

1. a need to communicate - verbal and non-verbal,
2. a need for coordinated movement - rhythmic activity,
3. a need for independence - to do and learn for oneself,
4. a need for order and sense - sequence and order,
5. a need for repetition - repetitive activities set the stage for insightful learning,
6. a need to abstract - to be able to relate to ideas, concepts, mental imagery removed from the concrete, tangible world,
7. a need for gregariousness - to be with, learn from, and relate to others,

8. a need for concentration - repeated activity which allows the child to develop calculative skills,
9. a need to satisfy curiosity - an inherent characteristic of the child,
10. a need to develop creative imagination - to relate 'new' information to the 'old', which results in appropriate modification or learning.